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Two put cracks in spy-der webs

By United Press International

The defection of a top member of the Soviet Union's KGB spy agency, who supervised the Kremlin's strategy in Iran, and new disclosures about a British linguist who gave away the West's code-breaking secrets shook the Soviet and Western intelligence camps yesterday.

The two cases seemed likely to force intelligence networks in both camps to rethink some of their most delicate operations.

British agents yesterday closely questioned Soviet defector Vladimir Kuzichkin, hoping to obtain a new picture of the KGB's inner workings.

Official sources said that British MI6 intelligence agents were questioning Kuzichkin at a "safe house" in Sussex. The defection of Kuzichkin, 35, a former vice consul in the Soviet Embassy in Tehran, was disclosed Saturday by the British Home Office.

AGENTS DESCRIBED him as a "big fish" in Soviet spy service who has provided valuable insight into the Russian espionage network.

"He has exposed the long-term subversion plan by which the Russians hoped to generate chaos and gain power in Iran when they felt that conditions were ripe," one published report said.

Sources said Kuzichkin had given British intelligence the names of KGB agents overseas and KGB operational plans.

While Kuzichkin's defection represented a victory for Western intelligence, there were new worries over the potentially sensational case of a British linguist charged with espionage last summer.

Geoffrey Arthur Prime, a 44-year-old Russian language expert, worked at Britain's ultra-secret Cheltenham communications center—the headquarters for all British intelligence communications and the nerve-center of links between the CIA and British intelligence.



Geoffrey Arthur Prime—in position to compromise code-cracking efforts.

PRIME WAS ARRESTED in July, but his case has not yet come to trial.

One published report yesterday, quoting American officials, said Prime was responsible for one of the longest and potentially most damaging Soviet penetrations of Western intelligence since World War II.

He provided Moscow with highly sensitive information on the West's attempts to intercept Soviet communications and break the Kremlin's code, the report said. He spied from 1968 to 1977, it said.

The State Department and the CIA declined comment.

Cheltenham, the main source of intelligence information about the Soviet Union, is operated by the U.S. National Security Agency and Britain's Government Communication Headquarters in cooperation with Canada and Australia.

Prime was in a position, intelligence experts say, to alert Moscow to Western intelligence operations and broken KGB codes—seriously compromising American and British code-cracking efforts.